

Good News Daily

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Palm Sunday, March 25

Zechariah 9:9-12 See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (v.9b NIV)

Penn and Teller, the Las Vegas magic act, do a TV show where they challenge other magicians to do their best trick for them. The goal is to see if they can fool the experienced pair of magicians who have been performing for 40 years. The key principle in magic tricks is to distract the viewer so they will not notice what is really happening. Penn and Teller know what to look for and are rarely fooled, even as the audience watching the same trick with them is bamboozled.

It seems like God also used some distraction as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The King is indeed making a parade entrance surrounded by a cheering crowd. But he is riding a simple donkey borrowed for the occasion. Who would expect any important person to arrive like that? So, no one stops him. God even gave away the plan hundreds of years in advance, to His prophet Zechariah. And it was all done in the open for anyone to see, if they knew what to look for.

Psalms 24, 29; 1 Timothy 6:12-16; Luke 19:41-48

Monday, March 26

Psalms 51 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (v.10)

In a popular real-life TV show, cameras watch as a business owner pays secret visits to his stores. He watches videos of his employees to see how they are doing their jobs and interacting with customers. Then comes the face to face meeting. Those employees who have done well hear praises from their boss. Then there are the other reviews of other staffers and their work, done poorly or not at all. It is Judgement Day. It is not fun.

Jesus walked around the Jerusalem temple on his last visit, watching how the work was being conducted. He is not pleased. But he didn't back down or apologize for his confrontation with the religious authorities.

The boss doesn't need to explain himself. But employees—that's a different story. They are not there to do what they want with the owner's property. That's not why they were called on. They are there to carry out the wishes of the one who built the enterprise in the first place.

Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12; 2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Mark 11:12-25

Tuesday, March 27

Lamentations 1:17-22 *The LORD is righteous, yet I rebelled against his command.* (v.18a)

When political leaders face questions from reporters, the theory is that the newsmen are looking for truth, for the sake of the public good. These days it seems that this is often just a show. Antagonistic journalists seem just as intent on tripping up the politicians they dislike for their own political interests. Sometimes it seems that is their only real interest.

The arguments Jesus faced in Jerusalem from Pharisees, Sadducees, and others, were not truth-finding missions either. They were traps designed to eliminate him as an opponent of those who were running the show of Israel's spiritual life. In so doing these leaders illustrated the very nature of human sin and rebellion that Jesus had been sent to redeem. Jesus answered their tricky questions so well that his opponents soon became afraid to keep arguing. But they did not give up. They would turn to more blunt and violent tactics to achieve their purpose before the week was over.

Psalms 6, 12; 2 Corinthians 1:8-22; Mark 11:27-33

Wednesday, March 28

Psalms 55 *My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me.* (v.4)

In the movie *White Christmas*, Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye are a show business team. At one point, they get into an argument. There's a question about whether they are willing to listen to each other. One challenges his partner, "You really want to know?" The other replies, "Yes, I really want to know! Lay it on me!"

The rule of thumb is *don't ask unless you want to know*. The disciples have that kind of conversation with Jesus halfway through Holy Week. Jesus was facing what was immediately before him that week, but in answering the disciples' questions he describes future events that stretch all the way to the day the sun, moon, and stars will fall, to be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth.

In a way, such a change of perspective helped all of them get through the painful hours ahead. As painful as they were to be, the future that would follow could give them hope through it all.

Lamentations 2:1-9; 2 Corinthians 1:23—2:11; Mark 12:1-11

Maundy Thursday, March 29

Lamentations 2:10-18 *The LORD has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago.* (v.17a)

In his temptation in the wilderness, Jesus met every offer Satan dangled before him by relying on things his Father had already said. Since

they were already known and written down, Jesus felt no need to find any other basis for direction. Three times it was enough to say, "It is written."

After the Last Supper, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, three times he repeated his request that "this cup" be taken from him. But in the end, he still let his Father have the final word. Jesus chose to let what had been written centuries before stand and be the last word. As Jeremiah had prophesied, "The LORD has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago."

Jesus still had painful hours to endure. But, once more, he had won the real battle by surrendering his will to his Heavenly Father. And, for emphasis, he did it three times.

Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 11:27-32; Mark 14:12-25

Good Friday, March 30

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-33 *Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love.* (v.32)

High on the list of useless information that I was given as a child was the declaration that sometimes preceded well-deserved spankings: "This is going to hurt me more than it does you!" I had a hard time understanding or believing that claim at the time.

The Heavenly Father no doubt had a similar thought as Jesus hung on the cross. Such facts were just as hard for observers to understand. "Why have You forsaken me?" Even Jesus admitted the question was there for him. The hard part came in waiting for the answer.

The prophet Daniel was told his prayers were answered immediately, but the messenger angels bringing the answer were delayed by demonic resistance for three weeks. In a similar way, the glorious compassion Jesus obtained for us this day was not yet obvious as the sun went down. But God's great love was just as certain and real then as it was later when it came to be recognized and celebrated around the world.

Psalm 22; 1 Peter 1:10-20; John 13:36-38

Holy Saturday, March 31

Lamentations 3:37-58 *Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?* (v.39)

None of Jesus' followers knew what to think on this day after the crucifixion. They'd heard him say, "It is finished!" but had not understood. Sunday morning, angels at the tomb would be saying, "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said." As He had always done, God revealed His plans before they unfolded. All anyone had to do was listen, if they had ears to hear.

Michael and Stormie Omartian were part of the first wave of contemporary Christian music a generation ago. In their final album, they

celebrated what Jesus accomplished for us: “Don’t you know? It is done! The battle has been won! It is done. *It is done.*”

The celebrations by Jesus’ followers didn’t start right away. And when they did start, they started slowly. But Jesus had fully completed the assignment he had been given by his Father. Today was a well-earned day to rest. Because the work, the hard part, was *done*.

Psalm 88; Hebrews 4:1-16

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